

Just Another Packet

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Summary: It's a routine by now. Ludwig goes to his neighbor's apartment, gets insulted, and receives his parcel, before he goes back to his own apartment. Maybe they even exchange a few words, but that's it. Until one day, things don't happen as usual, leaving him with some new stuff to think about. (Human AU, Two-Shot, Germany x Romano, Germano)

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****Chapter 01 "Neighborly Favor****

At the beginning, they had barely spoken to one another. The very first time he'd fetched a parcel from his neighbor, he'd only gotten as far as introducing himself when the packet was already shoved right into his chest "accompanied by an angry "Now get out of my sight, dammit." " and the door was shut into his face, before he even had a chance to catch a proper glimpse of his new neighbor.

Feeling a little confused about that strange encounter, Ludwig had just shrugged and went back to his own apartment. He'd gotten what he came for after all, and there was no point in meaningless small talk. He wasn't the type for that anyway. But of course, with his habit of buying stuff online "together with the fact that he often worked late and wasn't home to receive his orders himself " it didn't stay with only this one encounter with his neighbor.

Over the weeks, there had been plenty of situations where he had to go to the door next to his own, giving him enough chances to actually get a good look at his neighbor. He was quite a bit smaller than Ludwig, with dark brown hair and tanned skin, making his appearance a complete opposite to Ludwig's blonde hair and pale complexion. The actual interactions with his neighbor, Vargas as the nameplate said, were mostly brief, but nonetheless diverse. The other had some days,

however rare, where he was in a good mood, resulting in them exchanging a few words aside from "Here's your packet, dammit." and "Thanks." On other days, his mood was more on the sour side which led to some rather creative insults.

At one point, when Vargas must have finally realized that it had become a common occurrence for Ludwig to come over and pick up a packet, his annoyance increased. He started to make a lot of threats, some more serious than others:

"I'll just leave the next parcel I get in front of your door."

"I'll burn the next one I get, dammit."

"I'll open it and see for myself what kind of embarrassing stuff you buy."

Or his apparent favorite that he'd used on several occasions by now: "I'll shove it down your throat, bastard."

But with time, Ludwig also learned more and more things about his neighbor. One time, Vargas had lots of splashes of paint all over his clothes. So, most likely, he was an artist. And probably not just as a hobby, but as a profession, seeing that he was at home all the time when Ludwig wasn't or else he wouldn't be able to take delivery of Ludwig's parcels all the time. Another time, he opened the door while he was on the phone, speaking in what Ludwig identified as Italian. And while he didn't speak the language himself, he'd always found Italian to be beautiful, a melodic language that was easy to listen to and that he could recognize easily. He could only make out a few simple words he picked up somewhere, but it was enough to understand little snippets of the conversation, like the word 'fratello'.

So, all in all, he was pretty sure by now, that Vargas was an artist, Italian and had at least one brother. It piqued his curiosity. They saw each other on a regular basis by now, but he still only knew some rudimentary things about Vargas. Hell, he didn't even know his first name, as Ludwig only had the nameplate and the delivery notes to go on, and they both only featured the last name.

And after simply learning about his neighbor just from these small clues came the time where Ludwig's curiosity got the best of him, and he'd asked Vargas about his conclusions, but mainly about his art. And while his neighbor had seemed highly surprised by his interest, he'd answered anyways, and for once, his way of speech wasn't lined with insults and sneers, but instead with pride and mild uncertainty. It was the first time Ludwig saw a different sight of him, a more subdued and personal one.

* * *

><p>Today was yet another day Ludwig came home from work and found the familiar little card in his mail that told him the delivery man left another packet for him with Vargas. Once he put his suitcase into his office, he immediately went outside again to get his delivery.<p>

Mentally preparing himself for yet another insult as a greeting, he knocked on the door, awaiting the inevitable packet being thrown at his head. But, to his surprise, this time the door wasn't opened by

the usual annoyed face of Vargas, but instead by a guy he'd never seen before. He had a brown mop of hair framing his face, tussled in disarray as if he'd just woken up. A wide shirt and low-hanging jeans gave off a rather sluggish look.

"Hola!" the stranger grinned cheerfully at him.

"Uhmâ€|hello. I'm Ludwig Beilschmidt." He pointed behind his back, to his door. "I live next door."

"Oh, come in." He went back inside the flat, keeping the door wide open for Ludwig. He looked left and right, a bit unsure if he should take up the invitation. But seeing that it was the easiest and fastest option to get to his packet, he went inside, closing the door behind himself.

He followed the stranger into the living room where the brunette has already plopped down on the sofa. Ludwig felt a bit out of place, so he decided he would just quickly collect his parcel and then he'd be on his way again, although he was a bit curious about who this guy was and why he was here.

"Lovi has locked himself into his atelier right now. He said I distract him too much, so he can't work properly. Can you imagine that?" He took his phone out of his pocket and looked down at its display. "But I guess he should be done soon. His creative phases only last for so long before he gets tired or hungry."

Ludwig stood awkwardly in the middle of the room, but took a moment to survey his surroundings while he listened to the other's explanation. Frankly, it was pure chaos. Clothes were strewn all around the room, the table was full with used table ware and ripped-open packings, and all kinds of stuff â€" he feared to know what exactly it all was â€" lay on the ground. Ludwig had to resist the urge to tidy up this place until everything was spick and span again, just as he liked his own surroundings. But amidst all the various stuff in here, there was no sight of his parcel. So much for just grabbing his packet and leaving again.

"Soâ€|are you two going on a date tonight?" the other asked casually, making Ludwig spin around in shock.

"W-what?" Really, what? "Why do you thinkâ€|?"

"Well, it's a nice Saturday evening and you came here all suited up."

He looked down at himself. Well, he still had the suit on he wore at work. But that didn't automatically mean that he was here for aâ€|for a date.

"No, that's notâ€| I mean, I'm only here to collect a parcel. I wasn't home so the delivery man left it here."

"Oh, no need to be shy. I'm a longtime friend of Lovi, so there's really no use in lying about it. I know that Lovi's gay since he was 12, when he didn't even know it yet. And I'm completely okay with it. So, you don't need to hide anything."

Okay, this conversation turned really uncomfortable real quick. How

did he end up in this situation anyway? He just wanted to pick up his delivery and maybe exchange a few words with Vargas. Instead, he had this awkward exchange with a guy he didn't know " and who still hadn't introduced himself.

"I'm not lying," he persisted and ran a hand through his hair in frustration. Seemed like not only Vargas, but also his friends were irritating, for completely different reasons though.

And anyway, him dating Vargas the idea alone was absurd. But somehow the thought also made his cheeks feel warm.

Still, the stranger continued to talk, ignoring him and his objection entirely.

"It's been a while since Lovi had a boyfriend, and even then, the relationship didn't last that long because of..." he trailed off, shaking his head. "Well, I just want to make sure he'll be treated right this time." He padded the spot next to him. "So " Ludwig, was it? " sit down and tell me a bit about yourself."

Maybe he should just play along with it. That guy didn't give off the impression that he'll just accept his objections, so it may be easier than to continue dementing, even if it was the truth. And his older brother Gilbert often told him to loosen up and just go with the flow. Ludwig sat down, deliberately choosing the armchair instead of the sofa.

"Well, as I already said, I'm living next door. I'm an accountant and uh I like dogs." He really didn't know what he should tell him. Was that already enough? But the other only continued to smile, nodding encouragingly at him to continue which, somehow, only made him feel unnecessarily nervous. Kind of as if this was a new form of a job interview. For what job, Ludwig didn't know, but this whole ordeal left him with an ominous hunch. But...maybe thinking of it like a job interview would help him out.

"My strengths are logical thinking, I work concentrated and efficient on any problems I encounter, and I have a good eye for details. But a few people told me that I'm rather inflexible." At least that was something Gilbert often criticized him for. "And..." he trailed off, pausing to think of what else he should say. But

God, what was he doing here? Ludwig ran his fingers through his hair. Even if it meant that he would only prove that his brother was right in his criticism, but this was stupid. He was in no obligation to answer this guy. Time to end this farce.

He shook his head to get rid of all previous thoughts. "But nothing of this matters. I'm just a neighbor, and nothing else. A neighbor that would very much like to get his parcel, mind you."

Ludwig stood up. He would just come back tomorrow for his parcel, as, contrary to his initial thought, it didn't seem like he would get it now without Vargas present. Whatever king of game this guy was playing, he would have to do it without Ludwig. Who knew what this guy wanted to hear from him before he'd hand over the packet Ludwig came for " if he even knew where it was.

"Then, this really means you and Lovino aren't dating?" Finally, he

got it.

"Yes, we aren't dating. Like I said from the beginning."

"Oh." The brunette scratched the back of his head. "Would you like to?"

Ludwig started to blush. What was up with this guy to ask such a question? And more importantly: how should he answer such a question? To his luck, the door to his right opened up, the interruption saving him from giving a response.

Vargas " or Lovino as he'd learned " emerged from the adjoining room, though he froze on the spot once his eyes landed on Ludwig. His gaze flickered between the brunette stranger and him a few times, until he angrily addressed Ludwig. "What are you doing in here, damn it?"

"I came for another parcel." He pointed to the other who still sat on the sofa, grinning just like he did the whole time. "He let me in."

Instantly, Lovino's angry glare changed its recipient, now directed at the other guy, and Ludwig couldn't stop himself from feeling a slight satisfaction. Then, Lovino went back inside the adjoining room, only to come back moments later with the sought parcel. Finally.

"I hid it in my atelier because Antonio tried to open it several times," Lovino explained to him.

So, he knew all along about Ludwig's delivery? Then why did he have to go through with this idiotic interrogation? Ludwig felt a headache forming. It probably would be best to leave as quickly as he could.

"Thank you. I will take my leave now," Ludwig said once he held the packet in his hands. Without further ado, he made his way out of Lovino's apartment. He may have looked a tiny bit forward to speak to Vargas again for a short while, but this was enough for today. Though just as he stepped outside, he heard Lovino shout behind him.

"Wait." Ludwig turned around. "I don't know what Antonio told you but whatever it was, it was all a lie. Just forget it," Lovino asked of him, flustered, almost bashful. They looked into each other's eyes, awkwardly standing in the hallway, as a weird atmosphere was suddenly between them.

But before he had the chance to answer and ask what exactly Lovino meant by that, he already went back inside. A loud "What the fuck did you..." was all Ludwig heard before the door fell into its lock and Lovino's voice was drowned out.

He stood there, absentmindedly staring at the closed door for a minute, before he came back to his senses and made his way back to his apartment. Surely, that must have been the strangest encounter with his neighbor until now, all thanks to his guest.

Back inside his own home, Ludwig set his parcel down on the coffee

table and thought back on the last few minutes of his life. He was too preoccupied with telling stuff about himself, that he hadn't really time to fully realize everything that this guy, Antonio, had told him. For example, now he finally knew his neighbor's full name: Lovino Vargas.

And apparently he was gay, if he was to believe the talk of this guy. But Lovino explicitly told him not to. And he had the feeling that there was something strange about this Antonio fellow. And what was up with that last question? Would Ludwig like to date Vargas?

Well, he didn't know that much about Lovino till now. But somehow, now that he thought about it he wouldn't mind getting to know him a bit more outside their small interactions at Lovino's doorstep. Vargas had been the one he talked to most over the last couple of weeks, aside from his co-workers, but that was purely on a professional level, barely any personal information was traded. And while Vargas had proven to be quiet irritating, over time, Ludwig actually found himself looking forward to these small interactions they shared. He had been curious about his neighbor before today, albeit not in this kind of way this Antonio suggested, and now he was even more intrigued. But he couldn't understand why and that made him uneasy. Up until now, he had mostly ignored these budding thoughts and just enjoyed the talks with his neighbor for what they were, not expecting anything to change. Overall, he felt even more confused than he had in a long time. Even more so than when he was first confronted with Lovino and his difficult temper.

And why was Lovino so embarrassed anyway? Because of what this Antonio guy had told him? He could understand that people were cautious about having a sexuality that was different from the norm, but Lovino hadn't even been in the room and heard what they had talked about, yet he still warned him about his friend's words. For all Ludwig knew, Antonio really could have tried to pull his leg, feeding him some lies, and was now laughing at his expense.

But what if everything was true? Well then maybe the new information could be of some use for Ludwig. He'd never cared much about gender. When he felt a strong connection to someone, it didn't matter if they were a man or a woman. And there was something intriguing about Vargas, so maybe

With a sigh on his lips, Ludwig sat down on his sofa. It seemed like he had some serious contemplating to do

End
file.